

SMOKE ALARMS

Obey the Law



Save Your Life!



How do we know that smoke alarms can save lives?

It's a proven fact. Smoke alarms installed and maintained properly can double your chances of surviving a fire.

Every year in the United States, approximately 5,000 people are killed by fire. In most cases, victims suffocate from smoke before succumbing to the fire itself. Additionally, approximately 300,000 people are severely burned and millions of dollars of property is destroyed as a result of fire. Early warning systems, such as smoke alarms, could save **half** of these lives and greatly reduce property damage.

Approximately 80 percent of all U.S. fire deaths occur in the home. Fatal residential fires most often occur at night when residents are sleeping. In most cases, the best way to survive a residential fire is early fire detection and rapid escape to a safe area.

During 1998, the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department responded to 153 residential fires where people were alerted by smoke alarms and escaped safely.

Assistance is available to County residents through the following programs:

- **Operation Fire Safe** – provides smoke alarms to those who would not otherwise have them.
- **Visual Smoke Alarms**– a loan program for the deaf and hard of hearing.
- **Battery for Life** – provides free smoke alarm batteries.

How to properly install your smoke alarm

Alarms that are hard-wired into the home electrical system should be installed by a qualified electrician. If the alarm plugs into a wall socket, make sure the outlet is not connected to a wall switch that will allow someone to accidentally turn off the electricity. Ensure the plug has a restraining device to keep it from being accidentally disconnected.

Many detectors are battery powered and can be installed by the homeowner. Read the directions that come with the alarm for proper placement or call your local fire and rescue station for advice.

How many smoke alarms do you need?

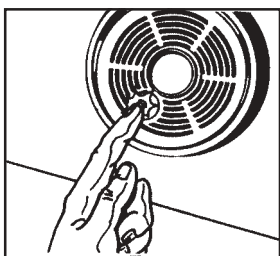
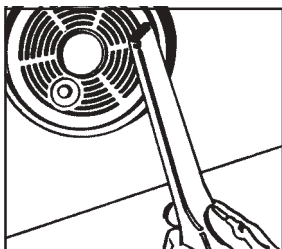
For minimum protection, a smoke alarm is required near each separate sleeping area of a home as well as in the basement. Placement should be in the middle of the ceiling or on a wall, six to twelve inches below the ceiling. Smoke, heated air, and many toxic gases will rise and begin to mushroom down.

For individuals who are difficult to awaken, it may be necessary to install an additional smoke alarm inside the bedroom. Additionally, it is recommended that there be at least one smoke alarm on every level of the home.

Smoke Alarm Maintenance

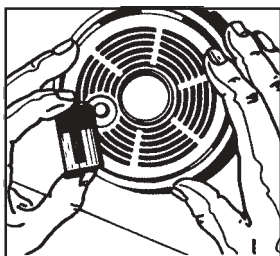
Routine maintenance includes three basic steps: vacuuming, testing and changing the battery.

- Clean the smoke alarm monthly by gently vacuuming to remove dust and cobwebs allowing proper air flow through all vents.



- Test the smoke alarm every month following the procedures recommended by the manufacturer.

- Replace the battery annually. An easy way to remember this is to change the battery every fall at the same time that you change your clocks back from daylight savings time. In several older types of alarms it may be necessary to replace bulbs. This should be done according to the manufacturers' instructions.

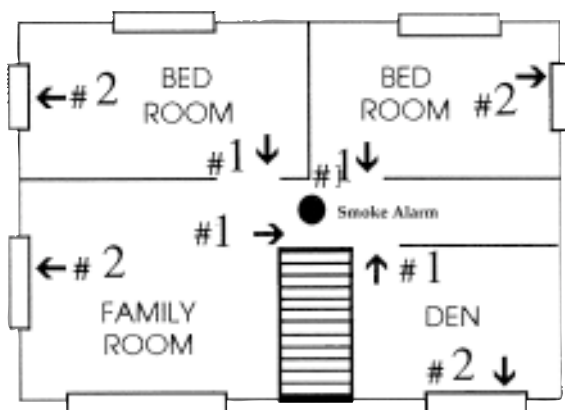


- Smoke alarms don't last forever. Any smoke alarm ten-years-old should be replaced.

Plan your escape

Once a fire starts it spreads rapidly. You may have only seconds to get out. Normal exits may be blocked by smoke, heat and/or fire. It is important that everyone knows what to do.

Plan two exits from every room. All family members should know all escape routes. Choose a meeting place outside the residence so you will know everyone has escaped. Practice escaping to test your plan before a real emergency.



If there is a need for immediate escape, don't waste time trying to fight the fire, and don't stop to call the fire department from inside the house. Get out and call 911 from a neighbor's phone or from another safe location. Staying in the house to call may cost you your life!

**EMERGENCY
DIAL 911**

Non-Emergency Assistance
(703) 691-2131

Smoke Alarms Save Lives; And It's the Law

Effective March 1, 1985, all homes and residential buildings with one or more dwelling units, including single-family homes, highrise apartments and condominiums, must have smoke alarms outside sleeping areas and in the basement.

This applies to those buildings and/or units that change hands after March 1, 1985. If a house is sold, rented or leased after March 1, 1985, it must have smoke alarm(s) in place and working properly.

The ordinance requires the owner of the dwelling, or the owner's agent, to maintain the smoke alarms in good working order. The **tenant** is responsible for reasonable care (including changing the battery) and for interim testing of all alarms. The tenant must provide written notice to the owner, or the owner's agent, for repair of any malfunctioning alarms.

Concerns about compliance with the law should be directed to the Fairfax County Residential Inspections Division at **(703) 631-5101 or the Fire Marshal's office at (703) 246-4849.**

ARTICLE 4.

*Smoke Detectors.*³

Section 61-4-1. Scope.

In addition to the requirements of the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code (VUSBC), and in accordance with authority provided by *Code of Virginia*, Section 15.1-29.9, the provisions of this Article shall govern the installation and maintenance of smoke detectors. (9-84-61; 29-84-61; 23-94-61.)

Section 61-4-2. Where required.

Smoke detectors shall be installed in the following structures:

- (a) All building containing one (1) or more dwelling units.
- (b) Hotels or motels regularly used, offered for, or intended to be used to provide overnight sleeping accommodations for one (1) or more persons.
- (c) Rooming houses regularly used, offered for, or intended to be used to provide overnight sleeping accommodations. (9-84-61; 23-94-61.)

³. **Editor's note**--Ord. No. 29-84-61, which amended §§ 61-4-3, and 61-6-4, added § 61-4-3.1, becomes effective March 1, 1985.

Section 61-4-3. Installation requirements.

(a) Smoke detectors installed pursuant to this Article shall be installed in conformance with the provisions of the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code. The smoke detectors required under this Article shall be either battery-operated or AC-powered units as specified by the provisions of the VUSBC.

(b) Appropriate permits as required must be secured for the installation of the smoke detectors powered by alternating current; however, no fee will be charged for the permit.

(c) The smoke detectors shall be installed in locations specified in the applicable sections of the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code. (23-94-61.)

Section 61-4-4. Responsibilities for rented or leased units.

The owner of any unit which is rented or leased, at the beginning of each tenancy and at least annually thereafter, shall furnish the tenant with a certificate that all required smoke detectors are present, have been inspected, and are in good working order. Except for smoke detectors located in hallways, stairwells, and other public or common areas of multi-family buildings, interim testing, repair, and maintenance of smoke detectors in rented or leased units shall be the responsibility of the tenant; however, the owner shall be obligated to service, repair or replace any malfunctioning smoke detectors within five (5) days of receipt of written notice from the tenant that such smoke detector is in need of service, repair, or replacement. (23-94-61.)

Section 61-4-5. Enforcement.

The Building Official, or the Building Official's duly authorized representative, is authorized to administer and enforce this Article. (29-84-61; 23-94-61.)

Section 61-4-6. Relationship to other codes.

Nothing in this Article shall excuse any building owner from compliance with all other applicable provisions of the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code and the Code of the County of Fairfax. (9-84-61; 23-94-61.)

Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Stations

Station	Location	Telephone
* 1	McLean	(703) 356-6671
* 2	Vienna	(703) 938-2242
4	Herndon	(703) 437-1233
* 5	Franconia	(703) 971-5858
* 8	Annandale	(703) 256-2552
9	Mount Vernon	(703) 780-0150
* 10	Bailey's Crossroads	(703) 820-2345
11	Penn Daw	(703) 765-4404
* 12	Great Falls	(703) 759-2300
* 13	Dunn Loring	(703) 560-1539
* 14	Burke	(703) 978-9200
15	Chantilly	(703) 378-5353
16	Clifton	(703) 830-1901
* 17	Centreville	(703) 830-8280
18	Jefferson	(703) 573-4505
* 19	Lorton	(703) 339-5141
20	Gunston	(703) 339-5970
* 21	Fair Oaks	(703) 591-0247
* 22	Springfield	(703) 451-0120
* 23	West Annandale	(703) 978-3340
24	Woodlawn	(703) 780-0110
25	Reston	(703) 437-7575
26	Edsal Road	(703) 256-2236
27	West Springfield	(703) 451-0453
28	Seven Corners	(703) 532-1451
29	Tysons Corner	(703) 893-0140
30	Merrifield	(703) 573-5321
31	Fox Mill	(703) 860-2680
32	Fairview	(703) 250-8900
34	Oakton	(703) 591-0273
35	Pohick	(703) 451-5500
36	Frying Pan	(703) 793-0043
*37	Kingstowne	(703) 719-9294
*38	West Centreville	(703) 802-2806
39	North Point	(703) 433-1418
40	Fairfax Centre	Planned
41	Crosspointe	Planned
	Fire Marshal	(703) 246-4849

* Volunteer Departments affiliated with these stations.

To request this document in an alternative format, please call the Public Information and Life Safety Education Section at (703) 246-3801 or TTY (703) 385-4419. You can also contact the department through our web site located at: www.fairfaxcounty.gov

(May 2002)